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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1507
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3532
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0109
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1071
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1977
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 003089

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, IRN/EAP, DRL/PHD, EAP/ANP

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: NORTH MALUKU -- GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION MIRED IN
CONTROVERSY

REF: A. SURABAYA 00059

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 02349

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons (1.4 b,d).

[1](#)1. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate Surabaya.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: On November 3, North Maluku province in Eastern Indonesia conducted its first-ever direct gubernatorial election. According to poloff who was on the scene, voting took place in a peaceful and orderly fashion despite turbulence in the run-up to election day. Nonetheless, the electoral process has been marred by allegations of favoritism and incompetence. The result--although not yet finalized--has already been contested and inter-ethnic tensions are spiking. END SUMMARY.

CLOSING IN ON A WINNER

[1](#)3. (C) As has been the case with many other Indonesian provinces in recent years, North Maluku conducted its first-ever direct gubernatorial election on November 3. (Note: North Maluku, a province of approximately one million inhabitants, is located in Eastern Indonesia, roughly 1500 miles northeast of Jakarta and 1000 miles southwest of Manila.) According to Poloff and Pol FSN who were on the scene as observers, voting took place in a peaceful and orderly fashion despite turbulence in the run-up to election day. There was a heavy security force presence. (Note: Per Ref B, there were large-scale and sometimes violent demonstrations in August when a local hereditary ruler was excluded as a candidate in the election by the local electoral commission.)

[1](#)4. (C) With 60 per cent of 620,000 ballots counted, incumbent Governor Thaib Armayin, who is backed by the Democratic Party and the Islamic Prosperous Justice Party, is ahead by 11,000 votes, according to the local electoral commission. Golkar Party candidate Abdul Gafur, a Suharto-era minister, is in second with two other candidates bringing up the rear. At this point, Thaib's lead seems steady, but not insurmountable. It is not yet clear when the final result will be available.

THERE IS CONTROVERSY

15. (C) Unlike most other regional elections--which have gone smoothly--the North Maluku election has been mired in controversy from the start and Abdul Gafur is already contesting it. Poloff and Pol FSN were told that several electoral commission decisions generated controversy in the run-up to the election. The election date, for example, was changed five times for various reasons (Ref A). Moreover, the November 3 date--which was ultimately selected--was in violation of a law on election scheduling. Furious over these decisions, several electoral commission staff resigned from their posts and its chair was assaulted by supporters of the three candidates opposing Thaib.

16. (C) One observer told poloff that he had recommended to the National Election Commission that it replace all of North Maluku's electoral commission -- "it is no secret that it is in the pocket of the incumbent governor," he claimed. Muklis Tapi, a former electoral commission member who resigned in protest, told poloff that Husein has gone into hiding due to the assault. According to Muklis, Husein aligned himself with the incumbent governor because they are both members of the same ethnic group.

17. (C) In addition to allegations that it favored the incumbent, the local electoral commission has been accused of gross mismanagement. Critics say the body was not up to the challenge of managing an election in North Maluku, which consists of thousands of islands and many remote villages. Inefficiencies regarding ballot delivery and vote tabulation were evident and had a serious impact on the quality of the election, according to observers.

TENSIONS SPIKE

18. (C) Due to all the electoral-related problems,

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inter-ethnic tensions in the area are climbing. The incumbent is a member of the Makian ethnic group and Abdul Gafur is a representative of the Tidore group. The two groups traditionally do not like each other and there could be further turbulence, perhaps sparked by the announcement of the final result. North Maluku, unfortunately, is riven by such tensions--violence in the 1999-2001 timeframe left thousands dead, for example. No one is predicting anything like that, but whoever wins the election will face a serious and immediate crisis of legitimacy.

HUME